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REQUEST FOR THE INCLUSION OF AN ADDITIONAL SUB-ITEM IN THE AGENDA OF THE FORTY-NINTH SESSION

SPECIAL ASSISTANCE TO COUNTRIES RECEIVING REFUGEES FROM RWANDA

Letter dated 26 October 1994 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Zaire to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

On orders from the Government of Zaire, and pursuant to the provisions of rule 15 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, I have the honour to request you to include an additional item entitled "Special assistance to countries receiving refugees from Rwanda" in the agenda of the forty-ninth session of the General Assembly.

This item would become a sub-item of agenda item 37, entitled "Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance".

Pursuant to rule 20 of the rules of procedure of the Assembly, I attach an explanatory memorandum in which my Government requests assistance through the General Assembly. A draft resolution will be submitted to the Assembly in due course.

It would be desirable for this item to be considered directly in plenary meeting.

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this request, including the explanatory memorandum, circulated as a document of the General Assembly.

(Signed) LUKABU KHABOUJI N'ZAJI
Deputy Permanent Representative
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM

1. The international community will recall that the deaths of President Habyarimana of Rwanda and President Ntaryamira of Burundi when the aircraft carrying them crashed on 6 April 1994 triggered the ethnic massacres in Rwanda. These led to an unprecedented influx of refugees towards the eastern frontier regions of Zaire.

2. The number of these Rwandese refugees and displaced persons settled at Goma and Bukavu is today estimated at more than 2 million.

3. This massive presence of refugees is having disastrous consequences of all kinds, particularly sanitary, economic and environmental. Thus, as a result of overcrowding and malnutrition there have been renewed outbreaks of long-eradicated diseases, claiming many victims among the refugees and among Zairians. The number of deaths resulting from cholera, dysentery, typhus and dehydration is estimated at around 800,000. This is a truly massive toll.

4. Faced with this highly disturbing situation, the Zairian Government has proclaimed the regions of Northern Kivu and Southern Kivu as disaster areas.

5. The most recent information from these regions reports not only growing insecurity, but also continuing havoc being caused by these diseases at Goma and Bukavu, despite the humanitarian interventions by the international community.

6. For this reason, if nothing is done, a prolonged stay of the Rwandese refugees in Zairian territory can only aggravate the socio-economic, environmental and health problems in this part of Zaire, while exacerbating an insecurity which already gives cause for concern. Only substantial humanitarian assistance on the part of the international community would make it possible to curb these scourges by relieving both the refugee and the Zairian victims of the tragedy in Rwanda.

7. It is important that the General Assembly should take action so that real assistance is extended to the host country which has agreed to house these refugees despite a particularly difficult economic situation. At the same time, it is vital that it should request the Rwandese Government to facilitate the return of the refugees to their country in order to avoid the long-term establishment of the Rwandese camps in Zaire.